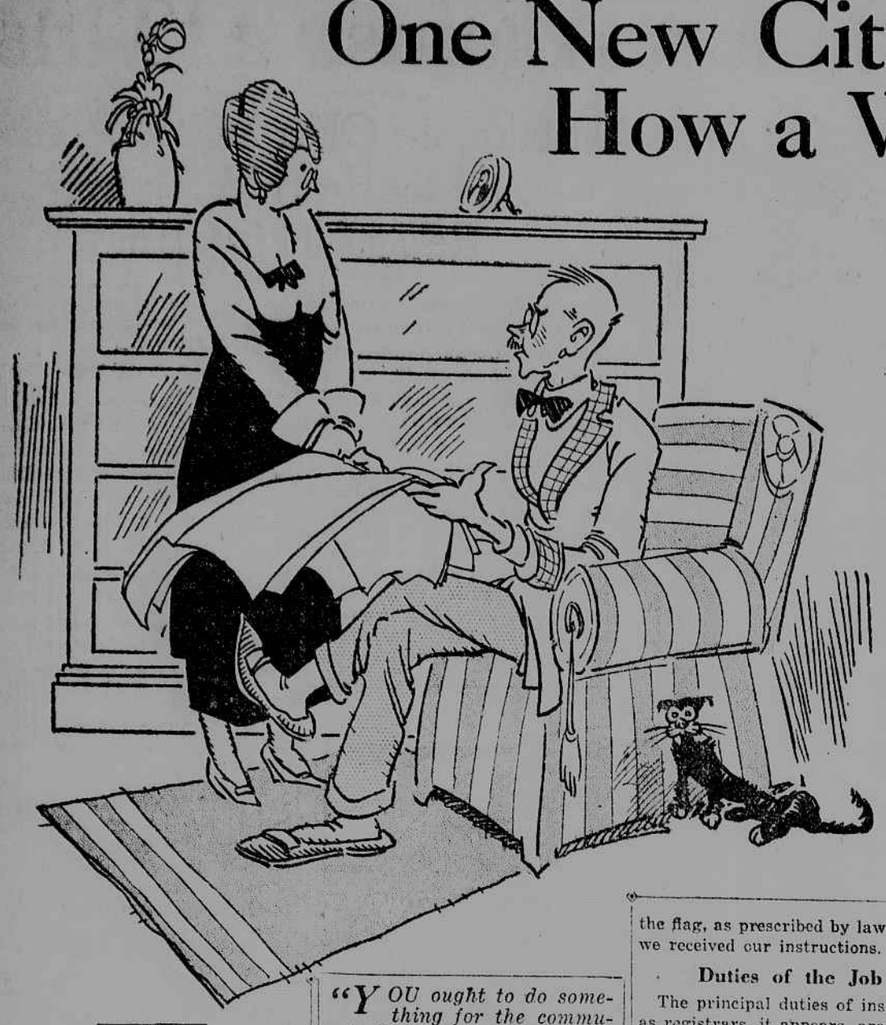
One New Citizen Who Saw Her Duty and Did It; How a Woman Voter Became an Election Official



"YOU ought to do something for the community," he said. (Gilbert is one of those men who like the word "community")

"WELL," he said, judicially, "your writing's full of character, but they ain't a soul can read it!"

CAME other literature! What was I to do? I couldn't vote for all of them. But, then, Gilbert is a congenital Republican and that helped to clarify the situation

By Deems Veiller

I AM an inspector of elections—at least, I was up to some time last week, when I cashed in my claim check and devoted the proceeds to—but that has nothing to do with politics.

It was my husband, who might be described as a congenital Republican, who started me on my political career.

"You ought to do something for the community," he said.

(Gilbert is one of those men who like the word "community.")

Doing Her Bit

I suggested that I was going to vote, that I paid my taxes promptly, made my returns honestly and that I was the mother of five children.

"That isn't enough," continued Gilbert. "I hear that they need people of intelligence and education to act as election officials. If you have any community spirit, you'll understand that this means you."

I started to protest, but Gilbert cut me off.

"Oh, you'll be paid for it," he remarked. "You've always wanted to make a little money of your own. Well, here's your chance. Go down to the Board of Elections in the Municipal Building and tell them you want to be an inspector. It'll give you a chance to see an election from the inside."

Gilbert, as I said, is a congenital Republican, and it's no use arguing with him about anything involving the community. The next morning I costumed myself to look like a snappy young business woman and fought my way through the subway into the Municipal Building. I marched into a room and announced that I was a college graduate, with special training in politics.

"Well, where's your man?" inquired the attendant.

"Do I have to bring my husband?" I demanded.

Into the Wrong Pew

"If you've got a husband," observed the attendant, "and you're thinking of doing business here—take my tip, young woman, and get out quick before you're pinched for bigamy. This is the Marriage License Bureau."

"Oh, then, this isn't the Board of Elections?" I remarked intelligently.

"They call this place a lot of things," said the attendant, "but I've never heard it called that. Try the eighteenth flooor."

I tried the eighteenth floor and after an official had scrutinized me for ten minutes, I received a blank to fill out.

"All right," said the official, as I turned in my card; "you'll hear from us.

"By the way," he added, as I was leaving, "you know you've got to pass an examination. Better study up, young woman, better study up."

So Gilbert and I started to study up. I reviewed all of my forgotten college courses in government, learned the duties of the State Comptroller—you'd be surprised, as the song has it, if you knew all he has to think about—memorized the election districts, the election laws, and a great many odds and ends. I never was much at passing examinations and I crammed industriously for a week.

The Examination

Then came a notice, bidding me to report for an examination. All the way downtown I went over the notes which I had made on the duties of the State Comptroller and where the 9th Assembly District ended and where the 10th began, and who could vote, and—here I found that I had taken myself automatically to the eighteenth floor of the Municipal Building.

I was placed in a large room with many other candidates, and a proctor—who didn't wear cap and gown, as they used to in college—passed out a set of examination papers. I began puzzling over the questions, when an amiable young man moved into the seat next to me.

"Hard?" he asked.

I nodded.

I didn't want to cheat in an examination.

He bent over my paper.

"If you don't know the answer to the first, this is it," he remarked, whispering the information called for. "Don't be scared; write that down."

I did.

"The answer to the second," he continued, in his friendly way, "is" . . .

So They All Passed

And I passed the examination with little difficulty. Gilbert says that I ought to have that guilty feeling, but I haven't. Everybody was doing it.

"Now," remarked Gilbert, "you ought to learn something of the issues involved in this particular election."

I didn't have long to wait. The next morning a bulletin from the Sons and Daughters of Somebody came in the mail. It contained a complete outline of the issues at stake and of the personalities concerned. I'm afraid I didn't get a very unbiased point of view from the circular, but it was easy to remember. The candidates were all divided into different religious beliefs, the sheep from the goats, as it were. I thought it was a wonderful way of dividing them off, so much simpler than trying to understand their different political platforms, but Gilbert said it was disgraceful.

Came other literature, assuring me that every candidate on every ticket was for the League of Nations and against it, that all were especially interested in women's rights, that all stood for purer milk and freedom of speech. What was I to do? I couldn't vote for all of them. But, then, Gilbert is a congenital Republican, and that helped to clarify the situation.

Duly Authenticated

One morning I received a beautiful red and black certificate, announcing that I had been "duly authenticated, examined, found to be qualified," and that I was hereby appointed inspector of elections and assigned to my own election district for duty. I was to report at the furniture shop around the corner for duty from 5 p. m. to 10:30 p. m. from Monday to Friday of registration week and from 7 a. m. to 10:30 p. m. on Saturday; 6 a. m. to 6 p. m. were the prescribed hours for Election Day. On Primary Day I was to be on duty from 3 to 9 p. m., but Primary Day was so uneventful that I felt as though I were being paid merely to sit about the furniture shop and to gossip with the district captains—two masculine but gentle women who had relatives running for office.

"It's a sinecure," I told Gilbert.

"Wait," said he, with a grin.

Now I know why he grinned.

My orders from the chief of the district board were to report a few hours before registration started. With great solemnity we displayed the flag, as prescribed by law. Then we received our instructions.

Duties of the Job

The principal duties of inspectors as registrars, it appears, are (1) to enter in the registry books the statistical data referring to each elector, (2) to number, at the close of registration, the names of the electors in numerical order in the proper columns, (3) to administer the oath to electors entitled to assistance for disability in preparing the ballot—I always looked forward to this ceremony, but our district seems to be unusually healthy—(4) to determine and to enter challenges and to turn over the challenge affidavits to the policeman at the polling place, (5) to do the clerical work required to complete the register, (6), to certify at the close of the sixth day of registration the number of the last enrollment blank used, with all the solemnities thereunto attendant, (7) to certify the total registration to the proper authorities, and (8) to make out police cards.

All of these duties were simple except the last. You would understand that if you could see a sample of my penmanship. A few days after registration had closed the policeman from the polling place called on me.

"Are you the person who made out these cards?" he inquired, flourishing a pack of names at me.

I confessed.

"Well," he said judicially, "your writing's full of character, but there ain't a soul can read it. Who's this 'Mubens' person you've got registered on this card?"

I examined the slip.

"That's Andrews!"

A Broken Engagement

"And is it? Well, suppose you and I sit down and try to figure out the rest of them."

That, for the benefit of those who have been wanting to know, is why I didn't go to tea as scheduled that afternoon.

Filling out an election book seems like an easy job, and it ought to be—but it isn't. Most people, I found, didn't know what "surname" and "Christian name" meant. One old gentleman said that his Christian name was Gould, but that his surname was Goldberg. Most of the registrants seemed to know where they lived, although many of them were somewhat in doubt as to the room or floor.

The age question, as might have been expected, bothered many of the women. It's odd that the young women of doubtful age weren't shy about announcing twenty-seven or twenty-nine, or whatever it was, but the older women almost invariably hesitated. The first comers usually whispered their age to the head clerk, but when this official bawled out "fifty-six" for the benefit of the other workers, the rest of the line grew wary and contented themselves with "over thirty." But I couldn't understand why one woman, who said that she had lived in this election district for thirty-two years and who came in with her married son, insisted on being listed as "over thirty."

German Born Were Ashamed

Many foreign-born women who had married Americans didn't know that they were citizens by marriage and had to be convinced that they could vote. Few voters of either sex were definite on the length of time they had lived in the state, the county or the election district. Usually we had completed the record before we discovered that the registrant had not completed the residence requirement for the election district. We noted also that German-born citizens seemed abashed when we asked for the country of nativity. One man wanted to know whether "abroad" wouldn't be considered an adequate answer.

The question relating to the business connections of the elector was frequently regarded as a challenge of some sort. Even wealthy persons seemed to dislike the idea of stating that they have no regular employment. We had relatively few "nones" in the occupation column. Even sedate old married women who toiled not insisted that they be recorded as "housewives" or "homemakers." The first woman who hit on the happy title of "homemaker" set the fashion and all unemployed females promptly registered in that category. "Married or single" was another question that delayed registration proceedings on several occasions. One pretty young woman announced that she was single, "but," she added, "I'm going to be married next week. I can vote, anyhow, can't I?" One particularly frank person answered the question by saying "Three times, but all of them were citizens."

The last column in the book is devoted to remarks—challenges, oaths and the like—and the registrar is supposed to record the sex of the voter in this column. Our head clerk was rather meticulous, and every now and then he ended his inquisition with "Sex?" "Episcopalian," answered one woman.

The Demands of Business

Business and registration conflicted occasionally in our polling place. All property "back of the rail" is considered inviolate, but one woman who entered the furniture store spotted an old cabinet which the proprietor had tucked away.

"I want to look at that," she said.

Apologetically, the proprietor led her behind the forbidden bar. We moved our records aside and halted proceedings pending the sale of the cabinet.

"I wanted it for my maid's room," explained the customer, "but it doesn't seem to be the right material. I'm sorry."

With this she swept out of the shop, and the business of registration began anew.

Half an hour later she entered again.

"I'd like another look at that cabinet," she said.

Again the line was kept waiting while she inspected the article.

"No," she decided, "it ought to be enameled."

We resumed our work.

An hour later she returned.

"About that cabinet"—— she began.

The head clerk picked up the heavy register, as though to hurl it at her.

"I've decided to take it," she finished, hurriedly. "Send it over."

Not Union Hours

I found that things were not as they seemed on my certificate. Although my day was done, nominally, when the polls closed, my work only started at that time. We worked every night until about 11, preparing police cards and checking up our records—with no time off for dinner. On Saturday we didn't desist until 2:30 a. m. Sunday morning. At midnight Gilbert entered the shop and came over to me.

"You can't speak to this lady," the policeman informed him.

"I don't want to," said Gilbert, cheerfully; "she's my wife. I just dropped in to see her work."

Election Day was the worst of all. We were ordered to report at 5:30, because the polls opened for the public at 6. Gilbert came in to vote at 11, and remarked heartlessly that he was having a few friends up for noon dinner.

"We're having roast duck," he said, "and sweet potatoes, and special salad, and strawberry ice cream"——

"Order that man out, if he's through voting!" I called to the policeman.

There was no dinner for any of us on Election Day and no supper. One of the party leaders dropped in about noon and announced that he had brought us something to ward off starvation. We looked eagerly at him.

"Well, folks," he said, "I hear we're leading in Kansas."

At that moment I wished that I could withdraw my ballot and cast a new one for a straight ticket against that man's party.

And Finally the Count

After the polls closed officially, the count began. At 3 a. m. the head clerk decided to call it a day.

"Well," I said wearily, "now for a good ten hours' sleep!"

"Is that so?" demanded the chief. "You report here at 8 in the morning to finish the count, young woman!"

There was something to cheer me in the mails the next morning—a card from a merchant who offered goods, promising to accept election claims in payment.

"I won't have to go through any red tape to get my money!" I thought.

Then I looked at the card again. It was from a firm of men's outfitters near the Bowery.

I'm glad that Presidential elections take place only every four years. I'm going to take some easy job about November, 1924, in a canning factory or some place where reasonable hours are observed. Then Gilbert won't be able to talk to me about community spirit. But he says that he's proud of me and that I helped to conduct the best election that ever was. As I said, he's a congenital Republican.

Auction Bridge

By R. F. Foster

Author of Foster on Auction, Auction Made Easy, Foster's Complete Hoyle, etc.

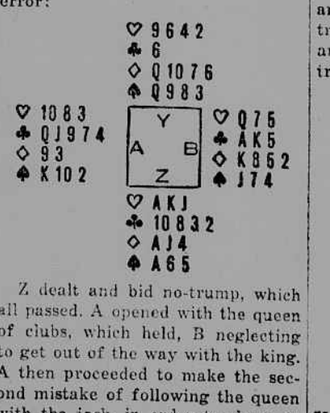
WHEN the original leader fails to win the first trick with a high card he can still indicate to his partner the combination from which he led as soon as he gets in again. Having led the king from king, queen, jack, for instance, and lost the first trick to the declarer's ace, if he regains the lead he should follow the rule about telling his partner something the partner does not know. The lead of the king has marked him with the queen. The second lead of the jack tells the partner something more.

While these may seem unimportant matters to some people, who imagine it does not matter much what they lead, as long as they win the trick, it may make quite a difference to the partner if he is warned in advance that he will have to discard several times or only once. The certainty of having two successive discards may change his entire plan, as we shall see in future articles on discarding.

Having led the ace from any combination, the king is denied. The proper continuation from A Q J is the queen, and from A J 10 is the jack. If there were not three honors in the suit the card to follow the ace should be a small one. With a good partner the fourth best is conventional, such as ace and then five from A 10 8 5 2.

It is seldom that a queen will hold the first trick unless the partner has one or both the higher honors. If it does, and the king is in the dummy, the next lead should be the jack, if the lead was from queen, jack and others. If it was from Q J 10, the second lead should be the ten. If the king is not in dummy, partner must have ace or king or both, and the second lead should be a small card, especially if the lead is from queen, jack, without the ten.

Playing against a no-trumper, a good partner, holding ace king and only one small card, should be on the alert to get out of the way of what is probably a long suit by giving up the king on the first trick, returning the ace and then the small one. Failure to do this may lose tricks in several ways when playing no-trumpers. Here is a hand in which I saw a valuable rubber simply thrown away by this double error:



Z dealt and bid no-trump, which all passed. A opened with the queen of clubs, which held, B neglecting to get out of the way with the king. A then proceeded to make the second mistake of following the queen with the jack, in order to show, as she explained afterward, that she did not hold the ten. B had to win this trick and the next, dummy discarding hearts.

Following the conventional idea, B tried to get A into the lead again by playing a heart up to dummy's weakness. As Z still held the command of the clubs, he finessed the jack of hearts, which held the trick.

Z's next play illustrated in an instructive way the point made in No. 7 of this series of articles, leading from the ace to the queen, instead of trying to get dummy in to lead the queen to the ace of spades. The object is not only to make two spade tricks if the king is on the right of the queen, but it is to get dummy into the lead, so as to give Z a finesse in the diamonds.

Whether Z puts on the king of spades second hand or lets the queen win does not matter. Dummy is sure to get into the lead then, or on the next trick but one, no matter what A leads if he wins the spade trick. Suppose he returns the hearts, and Z wins. A small spade to dummy's queen, after getting out of the way of the longer suit by leading the ace, and the fourth spade is good, although it is not wanted, unless the diamond finesse is going to fail and let in a fifth club.

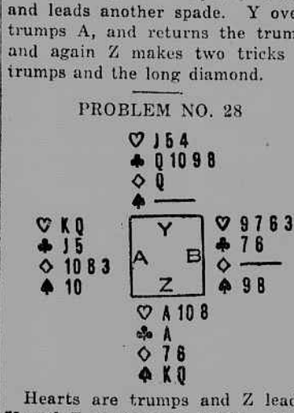
As the diamond finesse settles the game, it must be made, and as soon as dummy gets in and makes the spade tricks the queen of diamonds must be allowed to ride, and the next round makes the jack or ace, according to what Z has left. In the actual game A passed up the spade and let the queen win, with his clubs still controlled by the declarer. This made it easy for Z, as he could not lose the game, even if he lost the diamond finesse.

The answer to problem No. 27, given last week, in which hearts were trumps, and Y-Z were to win six tricks, follows:

Z starts with a spade, which Y trumps, leading a diamond, which B wins. B has three defenses. If he leads the trump Z holds the trick with the ace and leads his remaining spade. Again Y trumps, and leads a club. This Z wins with the ace and pulls the other trump in A's hand. Then he makes a trick in diamonds.

If B leads a spade, instead of the trump, Y can over-trump A, if necessary, and lead a trump, Z making both ace and ten, a diamond and a club. If B leads a club, instead of the trump or the spade, Z wins and leads another spade. Y over-trumps A, and returns the trump, and again Z makes two tricks in trumps and the long diamond.

PROBLEM NO. 28



Hearts are trumps and Z leads. Y and Z want seven tricks. How do they get them? Solution next week.

School for Card Players

AUCTION BRIDGE

Question—Z having dealt and bid hearts up to two, but letting A, on his left, play the hand at two spades, Y leads hearts, and although dummy has only one, leads them a second time, dummy getting in a trump. Z criticizes this as bad play. If so, why, and what better?—E. B.

Answer—Much depends on whether or not there appears to be a better chance by leading through dummy's strong suit, and so giving partner a chance to come up to dummy's weakness, if Y has any cards he might save, such as a guarded king. The bad play would be to let dummy make a trump when the declarer could get a discard at the same time; but if the declarer can follow suit to hearts when dummy trumps, no particular harm is done, as it is evident that the declarer himself could lead the heart for dummy to trump the moment he got in.

Question—Z is playing four spades doubled. A has led two rounds of diamonds and B has trumped the third. B holds ace, queen and one small club, two more trumps and five hearts to king, queen jack. He leads a heart, so as to make ten ace in clubs and set the contract for 200; but the declarer wins the heart with the ace and goes game by discarding a club on dummy's fifth diamond. A bets B should have led the club ace.—C. J. L.

Answer—The first consideration should always be to save the game. When the same trick that saves the game also sets the contract, all consideration of ten aces should be thrown aside, and the essential trick secured. A is correct. The only lead, with three tricks in, was the ace of clubs.

POKER

Question—We are playing deuces wild, each man having started with the same quantity of chips, and no one having bought more, when, after half an hour's play, it is found that one pack contains five aces and five deuces. The other pack is correct. A bets that all chips should be returned and the players start over. But what about the deals played with the correct pack?—B. M.

Answer—Only the deal in which the imperfect pack is discovered is void, and then only if the discovery is made before the last card is dealt for the draw. No matter how strong the presumptive evidence may be that the pack has been imperfect since the play began, it is impossible to prove it, and it would be folly to leave the way open for an unscrupulous player, who was away behind, to make a pack imperfect, so as to retrieve his losses.

BETTING

Question—I have been stakeholder for a large number of bets on the Harvard-Princeton game, and put the money in envelopes, with the names of the two bettors, intending to give each to the winner. In one envelope was $144. A says he laid B only 5 to 4, while B maintains it was 7 to 5. The difference is only $4, but I wish to know how to decide such disputes.—T. McB

Answer—There is nothing to dispute about. Each bettor gets half, as the game was a draw. The one who laid odds on Harvard was betting that Harvard had more than an even chance, in which the result showed that he was wrong, so he loses half of the odds that he puts up. Each man takes down $72, no matter what the odds were.

Ouija Board Invades Britain

LONDON, Nov. 10.

THE ouija board has invaded Britain! It masquerades under the pseudonym of "planchette," but it is the familiar alphabet and flatiron device that has helped to while away the tedium of prohibition in the United States. And apparently it has landed in force, because even now officials of women's clubs are debating as to whether the planchette is a game, or, if it isn't, what it is.

"If it is a game," argued one club secretary, "it should be played as a game in the cardroom and during the regulation card hours. As it is, the planchette enthusiasts are busily occupied with their favorite pastime from early morn to dewy eve."

Although she waxed poetic at the end, it was evident that the official was really disturbed about the exact status of the planchette. For it is said that the fascinating business of receiving messages from the spirit world—not the séance which was so popular following the war, but the more informal question-and-answer of the ouija board—is quite ousting the card games.

If no regulation planchette is at hand a substitute, consisting of an ordinary inverted tumbler surrounded by cardboard letters, is called into play. The fingers are placed upon the bottom of this glass, just as they are upon the little triangular device of the real ouija board, and it skips lightly from one letter to another spelling out its messages.

And the planchette is less expensive than bridge, because no one yet has thought of betting on the spirits!